Mr. President, I rise today to address the valiant efforts

of our men and women serving overseas in Iraq. Their service for our

country is very close to my heart because I, like thousands of other

American parents across the United States, have a son who is fighting

for the cause of freedom in Iraq.

Like every American, and especially for those of us with loved ones

who are fighting overseas, I have carefully considered our actions in

Iraq, and I am as committed to staying the course today as I was when I

voted to authorize hostile action less than 3 years ago.

Today, we see the wreckage of roadside bombs plastered across our

media screens. We are constantly bombarded by a daily media barrage of

every hint of bad news in Iraq. The old adage, ``If it bleeds, it

leads,'' seems to be in full effect.

What about the good that is happening as a result of our efforts? I

can tell you this is the greatest concern our men and women in Iraq

have. They are doing good work, they are making progress, but they

don't hear any of the good things that are going on. This is

disheartening, as are some of the comments made by a few in the United

States who say they are not doing a good job, who denigrate their

efforts. We owe them better than that. I could cite for you letters I

have seen written to newspapers in my State by men who have served in

Iraq saying precisely this.

Has there been any progress made toward democracy this year? The

Iraqis themselves answered yes, resoundingly, when last month, on

October 15, an overwhelming majority of Iraqis voted peacefully to lay

the foundation for their country with a national constitution. Ten days

later, on October 25, the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq

announced the approval of a constitution and stated that it had found

no evidence of significant voter fraud, as some had alleged.

The United Nations also participated in the referendum process and

concurred with the Commission's conclusions. On the day of the vote,

Sunni protests were minimal, with no violence reported. Not only did

the referendum pass with 15 of 18 provinces providing a majority

``yes'' vote, but all governorates recorded a high voter turnout, the

likes of which would put many of our voter districts in America to

shame. I can tell you from personal reports that in Sunni areas, Sunnis

were going out in record numbers to register. They were registering at

registration places protected solely by Iraqi security forces without

any violence against them.

When we look at the election results, the Kurds in Dahuk posted an

86-percent turnout, while the Shi'a in Karbala and Najaf posted a 57-

percent turnout. But let's consider the Sunni areas where critics say

we are making so little progress toward democracy.

Let's compare the percentage of voter turnout from last January's

elections to the October referendum last month. In Anbar, voter turnout

rose from 2 percent to 40 percent; in Diyala, from 33 percent to 67

percent; in Nayniwah, from 17 percent to 54 percent; and in Salahaldin,

from 29 percent to 91 percent.

Only two of those governorates voted overwhelmingly against the

referendum, and all of them saw record numbers of citizens exercising

their voices at the polls.

This, Mr. President, is progress toward democracy. Have we forgotten

that under Saddam, the Iraqi people had no vote, no opportunity to

express themselves?

I am not discouraged, as the critics say we should be, that there was

not near universal agreement on the referendum in Iraq. We have had a

hard enough time in our own country, the world's model for democracy,

in achieving overwhelming agreement on anything. And certainly this

body with its recent record of activity shows that democracies often

generate strong disagreements. The only time a national vote purports

to show universal agreement is when the election is held under the

tight control and dictation of a dictator such as Saddam Hussein.

So how do the critics explain this massive increase in voter turnout

and still maintain that democracy is dead in the water in Iraq, when

the people of Iraq for the first time in centuries now have a voice and

a common marketplace of ideas in which to express themselves? And why

isn't more attention given to the progress in Iraq for which our sons

and daughters overseas are fighting?

As for the media, it is my belief that the greatest threat to our

efforts in Iraq today is the enemy's ability to manipulate press

coverage of the conflict in order to influence U.S. public opinion to

force a premature withdrawal of our forces.

Last month, I spoke on the floor of the Senate about the acquisition

of a letter written by Osama bin Laden's principal deputy, Ayman al-

Zawahiri, to al-Qaida's foremost lieutenant on the ground in Iraq, Abu

Mus'ab al-Zarqawi. The letter underscored that al-Qaida will not relent

in pursuing its Sunni Islamo-fascist, extremist agenda, and it revealed

al-Qaida views its jihad in Iraq as the focal point in its effort to

establish a worldwide neofascist global caliphate. Zawahiri's recipe

for creating this Sunni extremist state is in this order: evict the

Americans from Iraq, create an Islamic extremist state in Iraq, swallow

up Iraq's neighbors and then destroy Israel, and from there go on to

bigger and better things. And how did Zawahiri advise Zarqawi to

achieve these goals? By augmenting his terror campaign with political

warfare and by manipulating the media. Zawahiri urged Zarqawi to tone

down egregious actions, such as beheadings, because they do not play

well on television screens. He approved of the violence but cautioned

him to execute Americans with a bullet to the head instead. Isn't that

nice of him?

The Zawahiri letter so clearly unveils the insidious nature of this

clever enemy we are up against. Therefore, I urge every American with

access to the Internet to read the letter.

But Americans shouldn't

have to go to a Web site to discover its content. It should have been

dissected in painstaking detail on the nightly news or at least given a

fraction of the time allotted to the critical coverage of the war.

It amazes me how there is such a blinding skepticism about anything

that supports our effort in Iraq today. Last week, my staff spoke to a

respected scholar in London about what he thought about the Zawahiri

letter. He said it must have been a fabrication. When asked what

evidence he had for that assertion, he responded: None, but it just

makes Bush's case, so the letter can't be genuine.

As a member of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, I can

tell you that we have absolutely no indication at all this letter was a

fabrication. So I ask again, why isn't the media delving into this?

We ought to take a brief look at the nature of the enemy we are

fighting in Iraq. I believe President Bush said it well last week

during his speech in Norfolk when he called their evil form of Islamic

radicalism Islamo-fascism.

We are fighting a radical ideology that has crept up over the past

few decades that is taking hold in countries around the world. We see

it in Palestine, in Indonesia, the Philippines and, yes, now even in

Europe. For the past week, we have seen the signs of it with riots

outside Paris. Rioters burned areas of the country for over a week,

lashing out against the Western society in which they live. Arab

experts explain the violence as an identity problem among young Arabs

who see themselves first as Muslims looking for a country of their own,

rather than French, English, or American citizens.

Al-Qaida preys on such youth, encourages their unjustified acts of

violence, and is now telling them that their new home will be in Iraq.

This is why in Iraq today we see so many foreign fighters flocking to a

radical cause. An insurgent fights within his country's borders to

defend it from occupation or to oust a government with which he does

not agree. This is the definition of an insurgent. A terrorist is one

who travels outside his country to wage politically motivated violence

elsewhere.

While there remain many Sunni Baathist insurgents who would like to

bring back Saddam, there is an ever growing and a proportionally lethal

number of terrorists flooding into Iraq to fight what they see as the

ultimate jihad, identified as their extremist neofascist interpretation

of Islam.

These are the terrorists who are fueling simmering insurgencies.

These are truly the Islamofascists. Iraq has become the epic battle

with the West that al-Qaida has been looking for and we must win it. We

cannot afford to lose. This enemy cannot be negotiated with and will

never reform its ways or be deterred from its path of violence. The

only option we have with such an enemy who wants to slaughter American

men, women, and children is to eliminate them.

Last week former President Jimmy Carter appeared on ``Larry King

Live'' and criticized President Bush for his policy of preemption in

the war on terror. He claimed this policy was a break in U.S. national

policy from all previous Presidents and administrations. Therefore, he

declared our actions in Iraq radical.

It is radical precisely because we find ourselves in dire

circumstances. It is a break from the past because in the past we were

not facing organized, ruthless bands of terrorists with declared

intentions to annihilate Americans, whose acquisition of weapons of

mass destruction was a distinct possibility.

Every student of national security understands that threat equals

capability plus intent. The intent of the

terrorists to annihilate us is indisputable, as is their stated

intention to acquire weapons of mass destruction to do so. Their power

is only limited by their current capability.

As David Kay said, in the Iraqi Survey Report which we discussed in

the Intelligence Committee and has now been released, Iraq, despite our

inadequate intelligence, was a far more dangerous place even than we

knew because radical terrorists were running loose in an unorganized

country that had the potential to produce weapons of mass destruction

for them.

We must erode the capability of those terrorists for if we sit back

and allow it to grow, we will face threats to the future such as we

have never seen before. Long-distance runners say there comes a time in

the race when their bodies yearn to succumb to the temptation to give

up the fight but they must press on. That is when they remind

themselves of the reasons for their struggle and when they remind

themselves why they run; they find strength to press on. Only those who

are resolute and full of conviction win the race. Let us hold to our

conviction that democracy is better than tyranny, achieving peace is

worth our struggle, and those who are counting on us in Iraq have a

reason to hope.

We must maintain the course and be ready to fight neofascists and

Islamo-fascism, wherever it exists. Right now it is Iraq, but there are

other theaters as well. Southeast Asia could become one added to the

list. Let us press on, for only if we do so will we one day win this

long distance race. It is not a short one, but it is one we cannot

afford to lose if we want to ensure that we have no more 9/11s or we at

least reduce the likelihood we will have such tragedy on our shore.

I yield the floor.